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ABSTRACT

Since issuance of the report, "A Nation at Risk," the quality and quantity of school/community-business partnerships have grown tremendously. These partnerships already are involved with bringing about and sustaining excellence in education and can become more so. Such relationships can enhance student learning and development and can also reap positive results for the business community. Programs vary and may include such activities as business-sponsored advertisements emphasizing positive aspects of education within the community, having professional people assist high school students with individual projects, having employees serve in a teaching or instructional capacity in the schools, and business recognition of outstanding teachers. Business sees the benefits of a prepared work force. Educators must be willing to overcome their apprehension of the outside community coming into the schools. Carefully planned and executed school/business partnerships can be very beneficial. These activities can bring additional resources to schools, provide a working relationship among diverse elements in the community, enhance the education profession, and better develop productivity and academic excellence within the schools. (YLB)

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"New Developments in Educational Excellence"

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"School/Business Partnerships for Progress, Profit and Productivity"
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Good Morning. I am delighted to be here at this timely and important conference on "School/Business Partnerships for Progress, Profit and Productivity." We have been fortunate to hear many interesting, informative, and innovative presentations during this morning session.

The subject which you are exploring, school/business partnerships, is one of vital and growing concern. During the three and a half years that I have served as the Assistant Secretary of the Office of Educational Research and Improvement in the U.S. Education Department, I have witnessed many advances in the concept of school/business partnership. In fact, one of the greatest changes I have observed is the growth of this effort on behalf of schools and business.

While the general notion of such partnerships pre-dated the issuance of the report A Nation at Risk by the National Commission on Excellence in Education examining the condition of education, there has been a tremendous growth in the quality and quantity of these arrangements since the report opened the eyes of America to the troubles confronting our schools, and signaled the need to seek creative solutions to erase the mediocrity currently pervading our educational system.

The possibility for creative, effectual school/community-business efforts are enormous; the achievements of these partnerships are far reaching. They already are, and can become even more so, tied in with bringing about and sustaining excellence in education. In fact, promoting excellence in education should go hand-in-hand in building successful business partnerships.

Two significant factors can be identified in the impetus behind this growing movement:

1. There has been the continuing emphasis by President Reagan on building links between the public and private sectors, utilizing the federal sector in creative ways rather than relying on federal programs.
2. The Report of the National Commission emphasized the importance of identifying other resources to support educational efforts. In one sense, education is too important to leave to the educators. A Nation at Risk highlighted the importance of bringing in outside resources to the school, such as professional associations and businesses to enhance learning experiences.

A few years ago, the extent of contact that a business might have with a particular school was limited to bringing in an individual to the school for a talk with students, most likely on the subject of career opportunities. There was no lasting relationship developed between that individual and/or business and the students. The next encounter the student would have with the business official was when he or she, after graduation, appeared at the door of some business seeking employment.

We have now come to the realization that relationships between businesses, and the individuals who represent those businesses, can be formed on a continuing basis in a meaningful and positive way. These relationships can enhance student learning and development as well as reap positive results for the business community. It can go far beyond career opportunities.

Businesses are interested in the schools and are bringing additional resources to the schools. Programs vary, and may include such activities as:

1. Local businesses will sponsor advertisements emphasizing the positive aspects of education within the community.
2. Some schools have been quite successful in identifying professional people in the community to assist high school students with individual projects. One school district has been very successful in such an endeavor securing the services of individuals such as medical doctors and physicists to serve as resources for students in the preparation of science fair projects. These individuals are able to work one-on-one with the students.
3. Some businesses are allowing employees time to serve on a regular basis in a teaching or instructional capacity in the schools. One major corporation in the New England area, which has had a very favorable rapport with the local school system, loans its executives to the schools on a regular basis.
4. Some scientific and technological related industries have established partnerships with technical schools in an effort to show the relationship between high school courses and career opportunities. Some Texas schools have been successful in such an endeavor supported by a major company located within the state.

5. Another approach to businesses assisting the schools is to assist in the recognition of outstanding teachers.
   a. Some businesses have sponsored such activities as a dinner to honor outstanding faculty members.
   b. Cash awards have been given.
   c. Businesses have offered supplemental employment to faculty members during the summer.

The activities I have mentioned are only the tip of the iceberg. As listed in the National Center for Education Statistics publication, the Digest of Education Statistics, there are 16,000 school districts supporting over 80,000 public schools in the United States. We are fortunate to have a tremendous resource of talent which can be unleashed to devise similar or even more innovative ways for businesses and the schools to work together.

If we believe, as has been the tradition in the American experience, that education is the road to success, individual development, and productivity, it is in the best interest of the private sector to enthusiastically support the education function.

There are an estimated twenty-three million adults who lack the basic skills which an education should have provided them. These individuals are, unfortunately, products of our school system. When businesses find that they cannot hire people who can perform the functions or duties that need to be carried out, business leaders realize that it is in their own best interest to support and assist in the educational process; they do have a real stake in the educational system.

Industry cannot be maintained, much less grow and flourish, without a properly educated workforce. It is far better to work to reduce drop-out rates or better develop the potential of academically poor students than to wait to face the reality of lack of preparation in the everyday business world when these former students become part of our unemployed or unemployable, the industrial reserve.

Educators--teachers, principals, supervisors--have been traditionally apprehensive of the outside community coming into the schools. Educators at al levels must be willing to overcome this, and be open to new resources. In the final analysis it will be the schools and overall our entire educational system which have the most to gain.

To realize the most from school/business arrangements, they need to be more than one shot deals; they should be developed so that they can be maintained on a continuing and expanding basis.

Carefully planned and executed the results of school/business partnerships can be very beneficial. These activities can: (1) to bring additional resources to the schools; (2) to provide a working relationship among diverse elements in the community; (3) to enhance the education profession; and (4) better develop the productivity and academic excellence within the schools.

The American ideal has always been to educate each generation better than the previous one. We are beginning to emerge from a malaise that crept into our schools during the past few decades. New resources for the schools can serve as the additional spark needed to turn the recently begun resurgence in our schools into the tidal wave of excellence that will lift them, and the students within them, to new heights of learning necessary to be

productive contributors to modern day and future society. We need to develop the talent so that we will continue our economic growth and prosperity into future years.

The importance of this ideal was stated by Columbia University professor, Diane Ravitch in her work The Troubled Crusade: American Education 1945-1980. She notes:

> To believe in education is to believe in the future, to believe in what may be accomplished through the disciplined use of intelligence, allied with cooperation and good will. If it seems naively American to put so much stock in schools, colleges, universities, and the prospect of self-improvement and social improvement, it is an admirable, and perhaps even a noble flaw.

We are gathered here today because we all believe in education. Let us not waste any resource nor avoid any opportunity nor overlook any challenge in the pursuit of excellence in our schools. Go back to your home areas committed to using the information you are gathering here to improve the quality of your schools and it will help in future years to improve the quality of your nation as well.